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Green Valley Creek restorers are 'environmental heroes'

by Dawn Pillsbury, Sonoma West Staff Writer

FORESTVILLE - Federal officials honored two environmental heroes last week: Dean Martinelli and Cam Parry for their four-year quest to restore Green Valley Creek.

"I came last July to see the project," said Patrick Rutten, field supervisor for National Marine Fisheries Service at the creekside ceremony on May 6. "I saw holes dug and a dry creek. I shook my head. I came back four months later. I've never seen a stream come back so fast.

"Dean might even get his swimming hole back," Rutten said.

Green Valley Creek lost its swimming holes - along with much of its native salmon and trout population - to human activity. Starting in 2001, Parry and Martinelli worked with the Forestville Chamber of Commerce, Dragonfly Construction and local, state and federal agencies to design a restoration project and get it done.

"We hit every brick wall," Parry, who returned to Forestville from his new home in Oregon for the ceremony. "But we streamlined the process for those who will come after us."

Last year volunteers helped in the effort that included installing boulder and log structures for pools and planting willows and other native plants along the banks. The creek is now deeper and starting to cool off because of the shade, said Rutten, who presented the pair with the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration's Environmental Hero Award.

"We used to swing off those vines into the pools," said Martinelli, pointing to vines growing in trees above the creek. "Until four months ago you'd have broken your ankle doing that."

Some 100 people attended the event at Martinelli Ranch, including 5th District Supervisor Mike Reilly, California Assemblywoman Pat Wiggins, Senator Wes Chesbro representative Jim Leddy and Assemblywoman Patty Berg representative Maddy Hirschfield.

"I've lived in this valley for 25 years with Cam and Dean as neighbors," said Reilly. "This project is incredible for all of us who live out here, a demonstration of what can happen in our community."

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